



## CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

March 10, 2016

**Senator Crisco; Representative Megna; Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee.**

**RAISED BILL #5518 - AN ACT IMPOSING A SUR CHARGE ON CERTAIN PERSONAL RISK POLICIES TO FUND REGIONAL FIRE TRAINING SCHOOLS OPERATING BUDGETS AND CERTAIN FIREFIGHTER TRAINING COURSES AND PURCHASE OF FIRE EQUIPMENT.**

My name is Vaughan Dumas, President of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association. Our Association represents approximately 26,000 paid and volunteer firefighters in Connecticut. I would like to comment on the subject bill on the agenda for today's public hearing.

The Connecticut State Firefighters Association requests that you support Raised Bill 5518. The proposed bill for a surcharge of 1% will generate enough revenue for the fire schools to operate efficiently without adding a burden on the state budget. The funding for the regional fire schools across the state has continuously declined over recent years causing a hardship, reducing the amount of training being delivered and causing fire schools to operate with sub-standard equipment.

The Fire Training School Committee represents of the Nine (9) regional fire schools across the state. This committee is a sub-committee of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association (CSFA) and is made up of two representatives from each fire school, the Commissioner of Fire Prevention and Control, and a board member from the CSFA.

Regional fire schools are used by both career and volunteer firefighters for initial firefighter training, continuing educational classes, and mandated annual recertification training.

The decrease in the funds this past year has caused one school to close for the winter because of a lack of funds to pay for utilities, other schools have had to reduce the amount of courses being delivered and lessen the amount of student contact hours. The amount of funds needed to run a class of 25 students in a firefighter I course is \$26,535.00. This cost is broken down to \$18,000.00 in salaries (\$20.00 p/hr) \$2,160 for income tax, \$1,625 for testing fees to the state (\$65 per student) \$3,850 to for live fire training evolutions, and \$900 in workman's compensation coverage. To keep the cost for municipalities at a minimum, the current fees charged for firefighter I training is \$850 per student which generates \$21,250 which is \$5,285.00 short of the funds needed. In addition, to this shortfall, there are other expenses to keep a facility operating such as facilities and equipment.

The lack of funding has caused all of the schools to use inferior equipment that beyond the date of service, instructors to use firefighter turnout gear issued to them from their departments which leads to passing on the replacement to a municipality, and being unable to afford to have equipment properly inspected and maintained.

Fire Training and continuing education for firefighters is important and it is not an option. Statutory law, specifically Conn OSHA 1910-156(c) (2) makes firefighting training, continuing education for persons in a position of supervision and annual live fire training mandatory. It is unreasonable to expect the members of 324 fire companies comprised of nearly 26,000 firefighters across the state, to meet certification standards required by law without regional fire training school facilities to train in.

We realize this bill is pending approval and we are respectfully asking that you consider passing this raised bill so that the burden of the revenue needed to fund the fire schools are taken away from the state budget.

Respectfully,

Vaughan I. Dumas, President CSFA